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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 000613

SIPDIS

PASS TO COMMANDER U.S. PACOM

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER STRONGLY SUPPORTS USG-ORGANIZED
CIVIL-MILITARY WORKSHOP

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the new Bangladesh army chief enthusiastically endorsed an upcoming workshop organized by a U.S. Government think tank to improve civil-military relations in Bangladesh. They voiced their support during separate meetings with Lt. Gen. (retired) Ed Smith, director of the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS), which will organize the event with local partners. The workshop is a key element of U.S. Government efforts to help Bangladesh grapple with a security sector in need of comprehensive reform. Post will work with the Government of Bangladesh and APCSS to ensure the most appropriate people participate in the workshop.

TOP OFFICIALS ON BOARD FOR WORKSHOP

¶2. (C) In recent months, the Prime Minister has expressed interest in U.S. Government offers to help her government work on security sector reform. An important starting point would be developing a comprehensive national security strategy that would strengthen civilian control and oversight over the military, which has been tenuous at best during Bangladesh's 38-year history. The February 25-26 mutiny by Bangladesh Rifles border guards, and the subsequent anger among army officers over the Government response, exposed the fissures between the civil government and the military and underlined the need to quickly improve relations.

¶3. (C) Embassy Dhaka has turned to APCSS to develop programs to help Bangladesh's leadership strengthen civil-military relations. APCSS Director Smith on June 11 outlined for Prime Minister Hasina plans for two workshops -- a regional event in October and a Bangladesh-specific one in Dhaka in November. He said the workshops would explore the proper roles in a democracy for the military, its civilian overseers and law enforcement agencies such as the police. Hasina responded by saying good civilian-military relations were "very essential, not only for Bangladesh but for this region." Her foreign affairs adviser, Mohammad Ziauddin, at the meeting praised Smith's plan as a "wonderful concept and good philosophy" that the Prime Minister would support.

¶4. (C) Director Smith also explained the upcoming workshops to the new Chief of Army Staff, General Mohammad Abdul Mubeen, who enthusiastically endorsed them. (Note: General Mubeen was army chief-designate when he met Director Smith; he took over his new post on June 15. End note.) So too did

Foreign Affairs State Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud, who said better civil-military relations were essential to secure democracy. A highlight of Smith's visit was a roundtable on civil-military relations at the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute think tank. Attendees included top officials from the National Defense College and various intelligence agencies. The guest speaker was the Prime Minister's security adviser, Maj. Gen. (retired) Tarique Ahmed Siddique, who stressed the importance of transparency between the civilian government and the military, and the need to create a national committee for security affairs. Both he and the Prime Minister said institutional exchanges between the government and the military at all levels were critical.

OTHER APCSS PROGRAMS WIN SUPPORT

15. (C) Bangladeshi leaders also expressed support for two upcoming regional APCSS programs, a Comprehensive Crisis Management Course in August and a Security Implications of Climate Change and Water in South Asia workshop in Nepal next March. Dr. Hasan, whose portfolio includes environmental security, was particularly interested in the water program. General Mubeen promised support for both programs, noting that Bangladesh still lacked crisis management structures at many tiers of government.

COMMENT: ROUSING RECEPTION

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16. (C) Although Director Smith was in Bangladesh for less than two days, he got what he came for: strong endorsements for APCSS programs from the government and military leadership. This enthusiastic buy-in, particularly from the Prime Minister, is essential to the success of the workshops. Although the road to improved civil-military relations will no doubt be long and complex, the visit confirmed that APCSS can play an important role in strengthening democracy and governance in Bangladesh. Embassy Dhaka will continue to work closely with APCSS and senior Bangladeshi officials to ensure the right people participate in the workshops and remain fully engaged in follow-up activity.

MORIARTY